

## National minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands in the new Europe: notes toward a relational analysis

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**National Minorities, Nationalizing  
States, and External National  
Homelands in the New Europe**  
Notes toward a Relational Analysis

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## Abstract

Nationalism remains central to politics in and among the new nation-states. Far from »solving« the region's national question, the most recent reconfiguration of political space – the replacement of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia by some twenty would-be nation-states – only recast it in a new form. It is this new phase and form of the national question that I explore in this paper. I begin by outlining a particular relational configuration – the triadic relational nexus between national minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands – that is central to the national question in post-Soviet Eurasia. In the second, and most substantial, section of the paper, I argue that each of the »elements« in this relational nexus – minority, nationalizing state, and homeland – should itself be understood in dynamic and relational terms, not as a fixed, given, or analytically irreducible entity but as a field of differentiated positions and an arena of struggles among competing »stances.« In a brief concluding section, I return to the relational nexus as a whole, underscoring the dynamically interactive quality of the triadic interplay.

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# Introduction

For well over a century, the »national question« has been central to politics in the vast and variegated region occupied before the First World War by the three great multinational empires – Habsburg, Ottoman, and Romanov – that sprawled eastward and southward from the zone of more compact, consolidated, integrated states of Northern and Western Europe. With the breakup of the Soviet Union – heir to the Romanov Empire – and of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia as well, the last of the region's avowedly multinational states have disappeared. Everywhere, political authority has been reconfigured along ostensibly national lines – a process that began with the gradual erosion of Ottoman rule in the Balkans in the nineteenth century but occurred chiefly in two concentrated bursts of state-creation, the first in the aftermath of World War I, the second amidst the rubble of the Soviet regime.

Yet nationalism remains central to politics in and among the new nation-states. Far from »solving« the region's national question, the most recent reconfiguration of political space – the replacement of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia by some twenty would-be nation-states – only recast it in a new form. It is this new phase and form of the national question that I explore in this paper.

I begin by outlining a particular relational configuration – the triadic relational nexus between national minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands – that is central to the national question in post-Soviet Eurasia. In the second, and most substantial, section of the paper, I argue that each of the »elements« in this relational nexus – minority, nationalizing state, and homeland – should itself be understood in dynamic and relational terms, not as a fixed, given, or analytically irreducible entity but as a field of differentiated positions and an arena of struggles among competing »stances.« In a brief concluding section, I return to the relational nexus as a whole, underscoring the dynamically interactive quality of the triadic interplay.

This very preliminary working paper, I should emphasize, does not offer a substantive analysis of the national question in post-Soviet Eurasia. It begins to develop, rather, a particular analytical perspective, best characterized as consistently *relational*, that is intended to inform long-term comparative and collaborative research on the subject.

# I.

Central to the new phase and form of the national question is a particular relational configuration that is unstable, indeed potentially explosive, and widely instantiated in post-Soviet Eurasia. This is the triangular relationship between national minorities, the newly nationalizing states in which they live, and the external national »homelands« to which they belong, or can be construed as belonging, by ethnocultural affinity though not, ordinarily, by legal citizenship. This relationship has been engendered, or given new urgency, by the new (or newly salient) mismatch between cultural and political boundaries. Tens of millions of people live outside »their own« national territory. Among the most important, by any reckoning, are the twenty five million ethnic Russians living in Soviet successor states other than Russia and the three million ethnic Hungarians living in states adjoining Hungary. The incipient long-term collaborative research project for which this preliminary analysis was written addresses the dynamic implications – in a period of massive political and economic dislocation and intensifying ethnonational antagonism – of the structurally ambivalent membership status of these two vast national minorities: the implications of the fact that they belong by citizenship (in most cases) to the new nation-states in which they live, but by ethnic nationality to their respective external national »homelands.«<sup>1</sup>

The Russian and Hungarian minorities of course differ sharply in a number of respects. Russians have been transformed only recently, by a dramatic shrinkage of political space, from privileged state-bearing nationality, culturally and politically at home throughout the Soviet Union, into national minorities in the incipient successor states; Hungarians, similarly transformed after the First World War, have been national minorities for seventy years. The Russians in the diaspora are mostly migrants, or children or grandchildren of migrants; the Hungarian communities are indigenous (state borders having migrated over them, rather than the other way around). Yet despite these and other differences, Russian and Hungarian minorities must contend not only with political and economic reconfiguration and dislocation but also with intensifying nationalisms – both in the polities in which they live, and in their respective

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<sup>1</sup> Many other groups or potential groups, since in many cases their »groupness« is more a political project than a social fact in post-Soviet Eurasia share the same structurally ambivalent membership status. Among the larger and more strategically placed national minorities (or potential national minorities) for whom an external homeland (or potential external homeland) exists are the two million Albanians living in Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia; the nearly two million Serbs living (before the war) in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina; the Armenians in Azerbaijan, especially in Nagorno-Karabakh; the Uzbeks in Tajikistan, and the Tajiks in Uzbekistan; the Turks in Bulgaria; and the Poles in Lithuania. In sheer numbers, Ukrainians self-identified as such in the 1989 Soviet census in Soviet successor states other than Ukraine are, at more than 6 million, larger than any of the other minority groups except Russians. But the »groupness« suggested by this distinct statistical existence is, from a sociological point of view, largely illusory. Both in the Russian Federation, where over 4 million self-identified Ukrainians lived in 1989, and in other successor states, Ukrainians have tended to assimilate linguistically to, and intermarry with, Russians. Although some political entrepreneurs have tried to mobilize Ukrainians as a national minority, they are, in my view, unlikely to succeed.



national homelands. Both groups are thus inscribed in the triangular relationship adumbrated above between the minority communities themselves, the states in which they live, and the external national »homelands« to which they linked by ethnofraternal ties.

That relationship is not everywhere and always conflictual. In the case of the perhaps three-million strong German minority of Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union, for example, the triangular relationship has a unique and largely non-conflictual configuration: guaranteed immigration and citizenship rights in a prosperous, stable external »homeland« act as a powerful solvent, and magnet, on German minority communities, leading, given the new freedom of exit, to their rapid dissolution and depletion through emigration.

In other cases, however, including those of the Russian and Hungarian minorities, the triangular relationship is more deeply conflictual. Here the new Europe, like interwar Europe, confronts a potentially explosive dynamic interplay between (1) a set of new states, ethnically heterogeneous yet conceived as nation-states, whose dominant elites promote (to varying degrees) the language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, and political hegemony of the nominally state-bearing nation; (2) the substantial, self-conscious, and (in varying degrees) organized and politically alienated national minorities in those states, whose leaders demand cultural or territorial autonomy, and resist actual or perceived policies or processes of assimilation or discrimination; and (3) the external national »homelands« of the minorities, whose elites (again in varying forms and degrees) closely monitor the situation of their coethnics in the new states, vigorously protest alleged violations of their rights, and assert the right, even the obligation, to defend their interests.

The research project alluded to above will explore the dynamic interplay between elites in these three political fields through three types of comparative analysis, involving comparisons across states of residence, between homelands, and over time. The first component of the project will focus on variation *among* Russians and *among* Hungarians in their response to the unfolding political, economic, and cultural situation in selected states of residence – Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in the case of Russians; Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine in the case of Hungarians. For while national minorities throughout the region share a single repertory of responses (including migration to the national homeland, acculturation or even assimilation to the dominant local population, and – most significant for this study – nationalist counter-mobilization demanding cultural rights, territorial political autonomy, or even union with the national homeland), the particular mix of responses varies widely, not only between different national minorities but within each national minority. The response of the great Russian diaspora, for example, to the superimposed changes in state boundaries, political regime, economic system, and cultural landscape varies considerably among Soviet successor states, depending on such factors as (1) the size, concentration, and especially rootedness of the different Russian communities; (2) their differential geographic, ethnodemographic, and political possibilities for territorial autonomy; (3) the differential degree to which and manner in which the various successor states pursue projects of »nationalization« at the actual or perceived expense of Russians; (4) the differential orientation of the Russian state, and of Russian nationalists inside the Russian state, to the various communities of diaspora Russians and their respective states of

residence; and (5) the differential path-dependent unfolding of the triadic interplay between the various Russian communities, their respective states of residence, and the Russian Federation.

The second component of the project will compare »homeland politics« in Russia and Hungary, focusing on inter- and intra-elite struggles to define the proper roles of Russia and Hungary as external national »homelands« of and for their respective national diasporas.<sup>2</sup> »Homeland« is a political, not an ethnographic category; homelands are constructed, not given. A state becomes an external national »homeland« for its ethnic diaspora when (1) political or cultural elites assert that coethnics abroad belong to the nation and that their interests must be monitored and promoted by the state and (2) when the state actually does take action in the name of monitoring, promoting, or protecting the interests of its coethnics abroad. Homeland politics takes a variety of forms, ranging from immigration and citizenship privileges for »returning« members of the ethnic diaspora, through various attempts to influence other states' policies towards its coethnics, to irredentist claims on the territory of other states. This part of the project will seek to specify the cultural and political dynamics specific to these various forms of homeland politics, through a comparative examination of the Russian and Hungarian cases.

The final component of the project will compare the overall configuration of the triangular interplay between national minorities, newly nationalizing states and external national homelands in the interwar period and the present. It will assess the role of imperial collapse, nation-state formation, regional state systems and alliance networks, great power rivalries, supra-national organizations, trade and investment patterns, economic crisis, and overall ideological climate in permitting, restraining, or promoting ethnonational conflict. We will seek to specify the manner in which political, geopolitical, economic, and ideological factors interacted to produce the disastrous pattern of ethnonationalism and irredentism that plagued Europe in the interwar period; and we will seek to specify the relevant similarities and differences today.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> I stress, to forestall possible misunderstanding, that by »homeland« I do not mean the actual homeland of the minority, in the sense that they or their ancestors once lived there. That is not necessarily the case. Nor need the minority even think of the external state, or the territory of that state, as its homeland. What constitutes an external national homeland, for the purposes of this project, is (as I explain in greater detail in the second part of the paper) a certain stance adopted by elites of the external state, whether or not that stance is endorsed by representatives of the minority.

<sup>3</sup> Although there is a large and flourishing literature on nationhood and nationalism, there is no literature that focuses directly and systematically on the central problem with which this project is concerned: the dynamics of the triangular interplay between national minorities, newly nationalizing states, and external national homelands. Sophisticated studies of the national question in interwar Europe are of course alert to the significance of such triangular relationships (see especially Rothschild 1974, Smelser 1975, Campbell 1975, and the older but still valuable studies of Macartney [1934, 1937]). An emergent literature on diasporas in international politics (Sheffer 1986) has begun to explore the analytical issues in more general terms, but its focus on migrant diasporas leaves out of consideration consolidated national minorities (such as Hungarians) who are settled, in considerable part, in compact areas directly adjoining their respective national homelands. The somewhat larger but still underdeveloped literature on irredentism and, more generally, on the connection between politicized ethnicity and inter-state relations (eg. Horowitz 1985, ch. 6; 1991; Chazan 1991; Rothschild, 1981, ch.

## II.

Having sketched in broad strokes the project as a whole, I want now to complicate the picture drawn above of the triadic interplay between national minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands. To invoke in this manner a relationship between three terms might suggest that the terms themselves are fixed and given. But this is not the case. The three terms in the triadic relationship are not fixed entities but *variably configured and continuously contested political fields*. Thinking of what we summarily call national minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands as political fields is a useful way of making explicit that these are *dynamic* and *relational* concepts, and that they should not be reified or treated in substantialist fashion as fixed or given entities. With this caution in mind, consider the three concepts in turn.

*National Minority.* A national minority is not something that is given by the facts of ethnic demography. It is a *dynamic political stance* – or more precisely a family of related yet mutually competing stances – not a *static ethnodemographic condition*. Characteristic (though by no means exhaustive) of this political stance, or family of stances, is (1) the public claim to membership of an ethnocultural nation different from the numerically and/or politically dominant ethnocultural nation;<sup>4</sup> (2) the demand for state recognition of this distinct ethnocultural nationality; and (3) the assertion, on the basis of this ethnocultural nationality, of certain collective cultural and/or political rights.

I deliberately sketch these characteristic claims – especially the third – in general and open-ended terms. For nationality-based assertions of collective cultural or political rights, although similar in form, vary widely in their specific content. They range, for example, from modest demands for administration or education in the minority language to maximalist claims for far-reaching territorial political autonomy verging on full independence. Other aspects of the stance of national minorities are also highly variable. For example, while some favor full cooperative participation in the

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6) has valuably explored the determinants of state intervention, especially military intervention, on behalf of (or in the name of) co-ethnics in other states, but it has not devoted much attention to the process through which a state becomes a »homeland« for »its« external diaspora. Other relevant literatures on which the research will draw, and which it will seek to integrate, include studies of post-independence nationalism and state-sponsored programs of »nationalization« in new states (Smith 1986); studies of the political and specifically ethnopollitical dynamics of interstate migration (Zolberg 1983; Zolberg et al 1989; Weiner forthcoming); studies of transition and other forms of »extra-ordinary« politics, in which the rules of the political game and even the basic parameters of statehood are uncertain and contested (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Stark 1992; Laitin and Lustick 1989); the »new institutionalist« sociology, with its emphasis on the institutional constitution of actors and interests (Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Meyer 1987); and the methodological literature on contingency in historical explanation (Sahlins 1991; Abbott 19xx; Sewell forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> This suggests why it is difficult to assert a status as national minority in states which do not have clear dominant ethnocultural nations (like the US). If the nation that legitimates the state as a whole is not clearly an ethnocultural nation but a political nation open, in principle, to all, then the background condition against which the claim of national minority status makes sense is missing. Collective self-representation as a national minority presupposes a certain type of collective representation of the majority.

institutions of the host state, including participation in coalition governments, others may favor a separatist, noncooperative stance. And while some may shun overtures to external parties, believing it important to demonstrate their loyalty to the state in which they live and of which they hold citizenship, others may actively seek patronage or protection from abroad – whether from a state dominated by their ethnic kin or from other states or international organizations.

This variation in specific claims to collective rights, and in overall »stance,« occurs not only between but within national minorities. The full range of stances just sketched, for example, could be found among the Sudeten Germans of interwar Czechoslovakia (Smelser 1975). It is the latter variation – the spectrum of related yet distinct and even mutually antagonistic stances adopted by different segments of »the same« ethnonational group – that leads me to propose the notion of field. Using this notion, which Pierre Bourdieu has employed and developed in an impressive variety of studies,<sup>5</sup> we can think of a national minority not as a fixed entity or unitary group but rather in terms of the field of differentiated and competitive positions or stances adopted by different organizations, parties, movements, or individual »entrepreneurs« who seek to »represent« the minority to the state or to the outside world, to monopolize the legitimate representation of the group.<sup>6</sup>

Competition in the representation of the group may occur not only among those making different claims for the group qua national minority, but also between those making such claims on the one hand and those rejecting the designation »national minority,« and the family of claims associated with it, on the other. This is no mere academic possibility. Think for example of »Russians in Ukraine« (and bracket for the moment the difficulties inherent in the very expression »Russians in Ukraine« – the fact that this expression, with its clean syntax, designates something that doesn't in fact exist, namely a definite, clearly bounded group of Russians in Ukraine).<sup>7</sup> There are different ways of conceiving what it means to be a Russian in Ukraine, only some of which are consistent with conceiving Russians in Ukraine as a national minority. At one pole, for example, Russians in Ukraine are understood as persons of Russian ethnic origin, most of them speaking Russian as a native language, who nonetheless

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<sup>5</sup> For a particularly clear discussion of field, see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, pp. 94ff. I use »field« in a broadly Bourdieuan sense, although I diverge from his usage in decoupling the notion of field from that of capital.

<sup>6</sup> Although Bourdieu has not written on national minorities as such, his essay on regionalism (1980) as well as a more general article on group-making (1985) contain suggestive formulations about the importance of representational struggles in the effort to make and remake groups.

<sup>7</sup> At the 1989 census, some 11.4 million residents of Ukraine identified their »nationality« (natsional'nost) as Russian. A larger number nearly 17 million-identified their native language as Russian (Gosudarstvennyi Komitet po Statistike 1991: 78). What is behind these numbers is hard to say. Clearly there are no fixed identities here, but rather a fluid field of competing identities and identifications. If the same questions were asked today, the results might differ considerably. And surely the meaning of identifying one's nationality as Russian would differ considerably. It was one thing to identify one's nationality as Russian when the Soviet Union still existed; it would be quite to do so as a citizen of a new Ukrainian nation-state. In any event, one should be skeptical of the illusion of bounded groupness created by the census, with its exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories.

belong to the Ukrainian nation, understood as a political or territorial or civic nation, as the nation of and for all its citizens, regardless of language and ethnicity, not as the nation of and for ethnic Ukrainians.

Were this view of Russians in Ukraine fully to prevail, there would be no Russian »national minority« in Ukraine. There would be persons of Russian ethnic origin, and persons speaking Russian as a native language, but they would not claim membership of the Russian nation. In fact, of course, there is no chance of this view monopolizing the field of competing identities. But since this stance does compete with an array of stances that do see Russians as a national minority, it too should be considered a constitutive part of the field of competing stances. We will continue to speak of »national minorities« for convenience, but it should be understood that this is a loose and imperfect designation for a field of competing stances, and that the »stakes« of the competition concern not only *what* stance to adopt as a national minority but *whether* the »group« in question should understand and represent itself as a national minority.<sup>8</sup>

*Nationalizing state.* A set of similar points can be made about the concept of nationalizing state, although this concept is more complex and difficult.<sup>9</sup> I choose the term »nationalizing state« rather than »nation-state« to emphasize that I am again talking about a dynamic political stance – or family of related yet competing stances – rather than a static condition.<sup>10</sup>

Characteristic of this stance, or set of stances, is the tendency to see the state as an »unrealized« nation-state, as a state destined to be, but not yet in fact (at least not to a sufficient degree), a nation-state, the state of and for a particular nation; and the concomitant disposition to remedy this perceived defect, to make the state what it is properly and legitimately destined to be, by promoting the language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, and/or political hegemony of the nominally state-bearing nation.

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<sup>8</sup> A similar field of competition between those conceiving a group as a national minority and those rejecting this stance (or set of stances) can be found in the case of Mexican-Americans. See for example the contributions to Connor, ed., *Mexican-Americans in Comparative Perspective*.

<sup>9</sup> One source of the greater complexity is the fact that the concept of nationalizing state is, as it were, »adjectival«; that is, it is a partial descriptive characterization of something – the state – which, even when it can be characterized as a nationalizing state, can also always be characterized in many other ways as well. Even when this particular aspect of its stateness is quite salient, the state's existence qua state is always something distinct from, and much more complex than, its existence qua nationalizing state. When we are justified in using the expression »national minority«, by contrast, the minority will have no existence qua minority apart from its existence qua national minority.

<sup>10</sup> A nationalizing state is precisely not a nation-state in the widely used sense of an ethnoculturally homogeneous state the very large majority of whose citizens belong to the same ethnocultural nation. Quite the contrary. Although it does not presuppose ethnocultural heterogeneity (for nationalizing projects can be, and have been, advanced even in ethnoculturally homogeneous settings), nationalizing states are ordinarily ethnoculturally heterogeneous. A further reason for preferring the term »nationalizing state« to »nation-state« is that the latter implies an achieved or completed condition, while the former usefully implies that this completed condition has not been achieved. A nationalizing state is one conceived by its elites as a specifically unfinished state (cf. the German conception, current in the Bismarckian period, of the unvollendete or »incomplete« nation-state).

Such a stance may be an avowed and expressly articulated »position.« But it need not be avowed or articulated for it to be »real« in the sense that matters for this project, namely exercising a *real effect* on the minority and »homeland« political fields. This may be the case if policies, practices, symbols, events, officials, organizations, even »the state« as a whole are *perceived* as nationalizing by representatives of the national minority or external national »homeland,« even if this characterization is repudiated by persons claiming to speak for the state. To ask whether such policies, practices, and so on are »really« nationalizing is of course meaningless. For the purposes of this project, a nationalizing state (or nationalizing practice, policy, event, etc) is not one whose representatives, authors, or agents understand and articulate it as such, but rather one that is perceived as such in the field of the national minority or the external national homeland.

This last statement raises a further complication. What does it mean for a state (or a particular practice, policy, event, symbol, etc) to be perceived as nationalizing in the political field of the national minority or that of the external national homeland? It is not sufficient for *anyone* who acts in those fields to perceive and characterize the state (or a practice, policy, etc) as nationalizing. The perception has to be »validated« or socially »sustained.« The perception and characterization of the host state and its practices and policies are themselves crucial *objects of struggle within the political fields of the national minority and the external national homeland*. This enables us to amend and enrich our characterization of a national minority. For we can now see that a national minority is a field of struggle in a double sense. It is (as we saw earlier) a struggle to impose and sustain a certain kind of stance vis-a-vis the state, namely a stance as a national minority; but it is at the same time a struggle to impose and sustain a certain vision of the host state, namely as a nationalizing or nationally oppressive state. It is a struggle among competing representations of the minority, but at the same time a struggle among competing representations of the state. The two struggles are inseparable. For one can impose and sustain a stance as a mobilized national minority, with its demands for recognition and for rights, only by imposing and sustaining a vision of the host state as a nationalizing or nationally oppressive state. To the extent that this vision of the host state cannot be sustained, the rationale for mobilizing as a national minority will be undermined.

But let us return to the concept of nationalizing state. I do not want to give the impression that the only thing that matters is the external perceptions of a host state's policies and practices as nationalizing. Such external perceptions – and the political stance they help justify and sustain – are indeed more important than the self-understandings of participants in the political field of the nationalizing state. But these external perceptions – in the field of the national minority or the external homeland – are not independent of the political idioms used by participants in the political field of the nationalizing state. For when nationalization is an explicit project rather than merely a perceived practice – when host state policies and practices are expressly avowed and articulated as *nationalizing* – the perception of the state as a nationalizing state will be much more likely to prevail in the external fields – among the national minority or in the external national homeland. Participants in these fields who are struggling to impose and sustain a vision of the host state as a nationalizing state (and thereby a stance as a mobilized national minority), will of course highlight and

constantly focus and refocus attention on the nationalizing idiom or idioms employed by participants in the host political field – especially when such idioms are employed by prominent or powerful participants.

Nor is it unusual for participants in the host state to articulate projects of nationalization, to conceive and justify policies and practices in a nationalizing idiom. Such an idiom is not only eminently respectable but virtually obligatory in some contexts. This is often the case in new states, especially those that, for historical and institutional as well as ethnodemographic reasons, are closely identified with one particular ethnocultural nation.<sup>11</sup> Thanks to the legacy of Soviet nationality regime (Brubaker forthcoming), which endowed ethnocultural nations with »their own« territorial »polities,« this is the case in almost all Soviet successor states; for analogous reasons, it is also the case in Yugoslav and Czechoslovak successor states.

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<sup>11</sup> In the twentieth century, new states have been created in three great bursts after World War I, when the territories of the great European and Eurasian multinational empires were divided and reconfigured; during mid-century decolonization, when new states were carved out from most of the overseas territories of the Western European colonial empires; and in the post-Cold War present, when, in a continuation of the process of the national reconfiguration of political space begun in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, incipient nation-states have been formed from the territories of the multinational Soviet and Yugoslav states and binational Czechoslovakia.

All of these states have been conceived by their dominant political and cultural elites as nation-states and, in a very broad sense, as nationalizing states. But there is an important difference between the new states that succeeded to multinational territorial states at the beginning and end of the twentieth century on the one hand, and most of those that were carved out of overseas empires especially in sub-Saharan Africa on the other. Almost every one of the former was conceived and justified, in the nationalist movements preceding their independent statehood as well as after statehood was achieved, as the state of and for a particular ethnonational group which, though in no case coincident with the entire state population, in almost all cases constituted the majority, and usually the substantial (though seldom the overwhelming) majority of the state population. Why this was the case would require a lengthy historical excursus; that it was and is the case is clear.

By contrast, most states carved out of overseas colonial empires were not conceived in the same way before or after independence as the states of and for particular ethnonational groups. Of course, in practice, some states or portions of the state apparatus, such as the army did in practice come to »belong« to particular ethnonational groups (not always the same groups that had been favored by the colonial administrators) (Horowitz 1985). But given the general discrepancy in scale between colonial units and ethnic groups, the rhetoric of anticolonial nationalism the claims to nationhood made during anticolonial struggles were framed in a territorial (and expressly supra-ethnic) rather than an ethnonational idiom. And leaders of newly independent states also framed their nationalizing projects in territorial and civic rather than ethnonational terms, hoping to build up a »modern« territorial national identity (Smith 1983).

In fact, of course, politicized ethnicity has flourished at least as much in post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa as elsewhere (Horowitz 1985). But in large part because of the discrepancy in scale between political and ethnocultural units, state-backed nationalizing projects could not be as easily linked to one particular ethnonational group as was the case in the new states formed from the continental multinational empires.

The point of this digressive footnote is to emphasize that nationalizing idioms more precisely, idioms of ethnic or ethnocultural nationalization were widely employed in the new states of interwar Europe, and they are widely employed in the new states of post-Cold War Europe.

Among those adopting idioms of nationalization, there may be – and ordinarily is – is wide disagreement concerning domain, manner, pace, and degree. Broadly speaking, we can distinguish among nationalizing stances by the means they propose to employ. For *coercive nationalizers*, nationalization is an urgent priority. The state should use both allocative and authoritative or coercive resources to pursue this goal. It is the readiness to use the latter that is distinctive of this position. At the extreme, of course, stands ethnodemographic change effected through forced migration or murder. But well short of this extreme, a wide range of authoritative or coercive instruments of nationalization is available. As regards language, for example, radicals might favor banning the use of any but the official national language in all arenas of public life – on signs, in schools, in administrative agencies and the court system, in public assemblies, and so on; or they might favor imposing language requirements for citizenship, for access to public employment, or even for continued employment in positions already held in the public sector. As regards jobs – especially secure, prestigious, or politically sensitive public sector jobs – radicals may favor replacing persons belonging, or viewed as belonging, to the national minority regardless of their competence in the official national language.

For *»inductive« nationalizers*, nationalization is important, and the state should actively shape the process, but it should rely mainly on incentives rather than coercion, on allocative rather than authoritative resources. State funding of educational and cultural institutions, for example, could be geared to the promotion of the language and culture of the state-bearing nation. Members of the minority nationality could be given incentives to learn the majority language (for example through subsidized or free language instruction).

*Laissez-faire nationalizers* share the ideal of a nation-state with a common national culture but reject special measures designed to force or accelerate progress in this direction, believing that nationalization is most likely to occur if left to occur *»naturally,«* without coercion, preferential or discriminatory treatment, or *»artificial«* incentives. At most, the state should try to create a general framework under which a common culture might take root, and promote and encourage general integrative forces, but without taking specific steps to promote nationalization.

Besides these nationalizing stances, we may briefly characterize two stances that reject principles and programs of nationalization in favor of cultural pluralism. (This is appropriate, since the field of struggle embraces opponents as well as (variously positioned) proponents of nationalization. The question around which the field is constituted concerns not only *how* but *whether* the state should be a nationalizing state.) *Passive pluralists* believe the state should foster cultural pluralism not by directly intervening in cultural matters – and certainly not by chartering or officially recognizing or supporting component cultural under which pluralism will flourish from the ground up, through the self-organization and self-expression of groups in civil society. *Active pluralists*, by contrast, believe the state should directly promote and sustain a pluralist society. This may official recognition and support of component groups, official bilingualism, corporatist or quasi-corporatist consultative institutions, proportional representation, etc.

The transitions between these abstractly characterized types of stances are, of course, fluid. Moreover, the balance of forces, or distribution of stances, will not correspond neatly across sub-fields. The balance of forces may dictate coercive (or authoritative) measures in one domain,



allocative measures in a second, and a neutral stance in a third. Rare is the state which does not use *some* authoritative measure to mark, at least symbolically, its character as a national state in *some* respect – even if this is taken for granted and therefore not perceived as such.

*External national homeland.* Since the analytical points to be made are similar to those made about national minorities and nationalizing states, I will simply outline them here:

1. Like the concept of nationalizing state, the concept of external national homeland denotes a dynamic political stance – or again a family of related yet competing stances – not a static condition, not a distinct »thing«.

2. Like the »nationalizing« stances discussed in the previous section, »homeland« stances inflect, or seek to inflect, (or are perceived as inflecting or seeking to inflect) the activity of a state in a particular direction.

3. Common to »homeland« stances is (1) the axiom of shared nationhood across the boundaries of state and citizenship; (2) the idea that the state in which this common nationality is dominant constitutes in some (contested) sense a (or »the«) homeland for co-nationals living in other states and possessing other citizenships; and (3) the idea that the state's obligations – and specifically its duty to afford protection – extend beyond the circle of those formally possessing its citizenship to include co-nationals for whom it is a homeland.

4. As in the case of the concepts of national minority and nationalizing state, these shared assumptions and orientations characteristic of the family of homeland stances define both a »position« – against those who reject the homeland stance by denying that a state's legitimate interests and obligations extend to protecting non-citizen co-nationals in other states – and a field of internal disagreement and struggle. The wider field is therefore constituted by struggles over *whether* and over *how* a state should be a homeland for its ethnic co-nationals in other states.

### III.

Let us return in conclusion to the triadic relational nexus between national minority, nationalizing state, and external national homeland. I have discussed the individual »elements« of this triadic relation, arguing that they are not really elements at all in the sense of elementary or basic terms incapable of further analysis. Each of the »elements,« I have argued, should be conceived not as a given, analytically irreducible entity but rather as a field of differentiated and competing positions, as an arena of struggle among competing stances. The triadic relation between the three »elements« is therefore a *relation between relational fields*; and relations *between* the three fields are closely intertwined with relations *internal to*, and *constitutive of*, the fields. The approach to the national question adopted here is consistently and radically *relational*.

A central aspect of the triangular relational nexus is *reciprocal inter-field monitoring*: actors in each field closely and continuously monitor relations and actions in each of the other two fields. This process of continuous reciprocal monitoring should not be conceived in passive terms, as a registering or transcription of goings-on in other fields. Rather, the monitoring involves selective attention, interpretation, and representation. The other fields are not merely observed; they are interpreted, characterized, represented. Often, the interpretation of other fields is contested; it becomes the object of *representational struggles* among actors in a given field.

Such struggles among competing representations of an *external* field may be closely linked to struggles among competing stances *within* the given field. Thus, as we have seen, the struggle to sustain a stance as mobilized national minority, especially as militantly mobilized national minority, may be linked to a struggle to sustain a representation of the host state as a nationalizing or nationally oppressive state. Conversely, a struggle to impose or sustain a radically or coercively nationalizing stance may be linked (1) to a struggle to impose a representation of the national minority as actually or potentially disloyal, or (2) to a struggle to impose a representation of the external national homeland as actually or potentially irredentist – a representation that might serve to justify a radically nationalizing stance, on the grounds that only radical nationalization could »eliminate« the national minority (through assimilation or exclusion or both) and thereby eliminate the danger of irredentism from the »homeland.«

Perceptions and representations of an external field (and the struggles that seek to impose or sustain those perceptions and representations) may be linked with stances within a field (and with the struggles among competing stances) in two analytically distinct but empirically intertwined ways. On the one hand – as suggested in the previous paragraph – the perceptions and representations (and the struggles to impose or sustain them) may be governed by independently held stances (and by the struggles among them). In a strong sense, this occurs when imposing or sustaining a particular stance to which one is already committed, independently of developments in the external field, »requires« imposing or sustaining a certain representation of the external field, and therefore generates efforts to impose or sustain that representation, through highly selective perception or outright misrepresentation of developments in that external field. In a weaker but still significant and very widespread sense, it

occurs when a particular stance to which one is already at least provisionally committed, or, in other words, a particular position one already (provisionally) occupies in the field of competing positions, disposes one, in entirely »sincere« and non-cynical fashion, through well-known mechanisms of selective (mis-)perception and (mis-) representation, to accept a particular representation of an external field, a representation congruent with one's own (already provisionally adopted) stance or position.

On the other hand, perceptions and representations of developments in an external field (and the struggles to impose or sustain them) may significantly reshape or realign struggles among competing stances by strengthening or undermining existing stances, or by evoking or provoking new ones. Instead of already-committed stances governing representations of the external field, here we have commitments to stances emerging interactively, in response to perceived and represented developments in the external field.

Thus stances may, on the one hand, shape (and distort) perceptions and representations of an external field, yet they may, on the other hand, take shape in interactive response to perceptions and representations of developments in that external field.

This dual linkage exemplifies three general features of the relational nexus with which we are concerned: (1) the close interdependence of relations *within* and relations *between* fields; (2) the *responsive*, *interactive* and *path-dependent* character of the triadic relational interplay between the fields; and (3) the *mediated* character of this responsive interplay, the fact that responsive, interactive stance-taking (or stance-shifting) is mediated by representations (and struggles to impose or sustain them) of stances in an external field or fields, representations that may be shaped (and distorted) by stances already provisionally held.

The relational and interactive perspective adopted here makes it possible to give due weight to both *structure* and *contingency* in the analysis of the national question in post-Soviet Eurasia. The relational field in which the national question arises is a highly structured one. In the post-Soviet case, for example, it was predictable – for historical and institutional reasons (Brubaker forthcoming) as well as for conjunctural reasons linked to economic and political crisis – that nationalizing stances of *some* kind would prevail among successor state elites; that successor state Russians would tend to represent themselves as a national minority; and that Russian Federation elites would engage in »homeland« politics, asserting Russia's right, and obligation, to protect the interests of diaspora Russians. But what could not be predicted – and what can not be retrospectively explained as structurally determined – was just what *kind* of nationalizing stance, what kind of minority self-understanding, what kind of homeland politics would prevail in the struggles among competing stances within these three relational fields, and just how the path-dependent, interactive interplay between the three fields would develop. Here explanation must acknowledge, and theorize, the crucial causal significance of the contingency inherent in social action, without neglecting the powerful structuration of the relational fields in which action and struggle occur.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> On contingency see Sahlins 1991, Abbott 19xx, and Sewell (forthcoming).

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